A

LETTER

FROM

A Minister in the Country,

To a MEMBER

OF THE

CONVOCATION.

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Licensed and Entred according to Order.

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A LETTER

FROM

A Miniſter in the Country, to a Member of the Convocation.

SIR,

I Look'd upon it as a good Omen, when the firſt Proctor that I heard of choſen to ſerve in the Convocation, was you, of whoſe Prudence, Temper, and Judgment I have had long Experience. The ſenſe of which ſo far tranſported me, that had you not invited it, I ſhould hardly have forborn to give you my thoughts about the Matters which I hear are likely to be offered to your Conſideration in that Venerable Aſſembly.

Matters certainly of great Importance to our Church, a Church which I am certain of, in reſpect of its Doctrine, Worſhip, and Order, is inferiour to none upon the face of the Earth. And therefore what we ought with all imagina-

ble care at all times to preſerve, but in this preſent Juncture more eſpecially to reſpect.

For if what Report, and ſome Letters, and the *Queries* ſuggeſt be true, we have reaſon to fear, there is a Cloud hanging over us in the Commiſſion lately ſet up, that portends no leſs than Ruin to our Conſtitution, by taking away the two main Supports of it, our Liturgy and Epiſcopacy.

A matter, if true, you cannot be too intent upon, nor too reſolute to oppoſe; and if ſuch things be complied with by you, and thoſe of your ſtation, you muſt be falſe to the Truſt repoſed in you, and to the Church of which you are Members, Miniſters, and at this preſent Repreſentatives.

But I muſt confeſs to you, I begin to think that we have been impos'd upon by the Artifice of ſome, and the Credulity of others; for having met with a Book, called, *A Diſcourſe concerning the Eccleſiaſtical Commiſſion*, and convers'd of late with ſeveral diſcerning and impartial Perſons, that have penetrated into this matter further than ſome of us, I find that there is little elſe intended than what you and I, and ſeveral of our Acquaintance have thought would be rather for the Advantage, Security, and Honour of our Church, than to the Prejudice and Detriment of it.

And if the refreſhing of theſe things, and laying them in ſome Order before you, will be of any uſe to you (as you pretend) I ſhall (as the time

time will permit) do my beſt to anſwer your deſires; and in diſcourſing upon which,

1. I ſhall ſhew, that there are ſuch things in our Church, as are in their nature alterable; and what they are.

2. That there are ſuch things in our Church which may be altered, and the Church not the worſe for ſuch alterations.

3. There are ſuch things as may be altered, and the Church be the better for ſuch alterations.

4. That this is a proper ſeaſon for ſuch alterations.

1. That there are ſuch things in the Church as are in their nature alterable; and may upon juſt Occaſion be altered, has been the conſtant Opinion of our Church; And which for the Authority of it, and the Excellency of its Reaſoning, I ſhall chooſe to ſet down in its own words. *It has been the wiſdom of the Church of* England, *ever ſince the firſt compiling of her Publick Liturgy, to keep the Mean between the two Extreams, of too much ſtiffneſs in refuſing, and of too much eaſineſs in admitting any variation from it. For, as on the one ſide common Experience ſheweth, that where a change has been made of things adviſedly eſtabliſhed (no evident Neceſſity ſo requiring) ſundry inconveniencies have thereupon enſued; and thoſe many times more, and greater than the evils that were intended to be remedied by ſuch change. So on the other* Preface to the *Service-Book.*

ſide, particular Forms of Divine Worſhip, and the Rites and Ceremonies appointed to be uſed therein, being things in their own nature Indifferent and Alterable, and ſo acknowledged, it is but reaſonable, that upon weighty and important Conſiderations, according to the various exigency of Times and Occaſions, ſuch changes and alterations ſhould be made therein, as to thoſe that are in place of Authority, ſhould from time to time, ſeem either neceſſary or expedient. So the Homily of Faſting, Part 1. *&* *Article* 34, &c.

So that ſetting aſide (what in this caſe is to be ſuppoſed not concerned in the preſent Debate) the Eſſentials belonging to our Religion, and our Church (without the former of which it would not be a true or compleat Church, and without the latter it would not be our Church) there is nothing but what as it's alterable, ſo may in ſuch Circumſtances be altered.

2. There are ſuch things in our Church as may be altered, and the Church not be the worſe for ſuch alterations. Which Rule ſuppoſes the Alterations ſuch as are conſiſtent with the *Being* and *Security* of our Church. *With the Being*, whereby are excluded all ſuch as will not allow a National Church, Epiſcopacy, and a Liturgy. *With the Security*, and ſo are excluded ſuch alterations as will do more miſchief by dividing us among our ſelves, than good by uniting others to us. And ſuch alterations I conceive would be the new modelling of the Liturgy, and the forbidding wholly the uſe of the eſtabliſhed Rites and Ceremonies

monies. If the matters propoſed for Alteration be of the former ſort, there can be no Accommodation; if of the latter, the time and ſeaſon are to be reſpected, as well as the things themſelves: which will alſo be debated in the cloſe.

Setting aſide the Objections againſt the Eſſentials of our Church, as not to our preſent purpoſe: the reſt may be comprehended in this order:

The Kalendar, The Service, The Rites, Reordination, Subſcription and Declaration, Government and Diſcipline.

1. The Kalendar. And herein the firſt thing that is to be conſidered is the *Apocrypha*, the Books of which being only of Humane Compoſure, have not only been all along objected againſt by Diſſenters, but alſo wiſhed by many amongſt our ſelves might be exchanged for Leſſons out of the Canonical Scripture, as by the Biſhops, and other Epiſcopal Divines, aſſembled to conſider of theſe matters in 1641. It's acknowledged that ſome of theſe Books contain matter of excellent uſe, and have been anciently read in the Chriſtian Church. But the firſt of theſe is no Reaſon for thoſe Books which contain things neither profitable nor true: nor can it be of any force, when there are Chapters of Canonical Scripture, that may with great profit be read, and are omitted for their ſake.

(1.) If any of them were anciently read. So were *Hermes Paſtor*, and *Clemens Romanus*. And if that is a reaſon why the one, it's a reaſon why what we have of the other ſhould be read alſo.

(2.) If

(2) If they were read then, we know what miſchief enſued from it, when there were ſome of the Ancients thought too favourable of ſome of them: And the Church of *Rome* has of Apocrypha made them Canonical: To whom our reading of them may be thought to give too much countenance.

To this I may add the reviſing of the Pſalter added to our Liturgy; which though in its time, and before a better could be had, was of ſingular uſe, yet ſeems now not ſo defenſible, when there is a *more correct* in our hands. A *more correct* I call it, after the Biſhop of *Cork*, ſince thoſe that will take the pains to compare this with the original, cannot but be ſenſible of the manifold variations of it from the *Hebrew*, ſome while adding Phraſes and Verſes; another while leaving out, and frequently miſtaking the ſenſe of it; And as learned men obſerve this, ſo vulgar Readers may ſometimes find the inconſiſtency of one *Tranſlation* with the other, which muſt needs create no little ſcruple in their minds by having inconſiſtent, as well as confuſion by having different Tranſlations. And whereas it's pleaded the people are uſed to this, and ſome ſo as to have it by heart, I anſwer, the people are uſed at home, and by the Quotations from it in Sermons and Books, and Paraphraſes upon it in Print, to the other. And if we compute how few come to daily Prayers to thoſe that do not, and how few of thoſe that do come can repeat the Pſalms *memoriter* to thoſe that cannot, the number that may be preſum'd will

The *Proteſtant Peacemaker*, p. 120. 1682.

will be for the old, will be inconſiderable to thoſe that will be for the new. Beſides, if this were true, its an argument only for the preſent age, and not for the next. And which if it had been of any force, there could never reaſonably have been any ſecond Tranſlation of the Bible after a firſt; for what they had they were more uſed to than what they had not. Theſe are things the aforeſaid excellent Biſhop thinks will eaſily be granted, *p.* 120.

2. As for the *Service* I ſhall conſider it in another place; and ſhall therefore now paſs to the 3 Rites and Ceremonies. Here I take it for granted. 1. That the Ceremonies that we are obliged to obſerve are no other than what are *preſcribed* in the Book of Common-Prayer; and ſo Bowing at the Name of Jeſus, and toward the Altar, being not therein *preſcribed*, are not concerned in the caſe before us.

2. I take it for granted that the Ring in Marriage is now on all ſides accounted a meer Civil and not a Religious Rite; and ſo what remain, are only the Surplice, the Croſs, and Kneeling at the Sacrament.

3. I take it for granted again, that if the circumſtances of times and ſtate of the Church make it more neceſſary to lay any of them aſide, or alter them, than to continue the uſe of them, that it's then lawful and reaſonable according to the Doctrine of our Church, to alter or aboliſh them: And that though they have been never ſo venerable for Antiquity; ſince even

thoſe

thoſe that were once of Divine Inſtitution, and of Apoſtolical uſe have been changed or prohibited when the caſe was altered, or need ſo required; as it was in the poſture at the Paſſover among the *Jews*, the time of Celebrating the Lord's Supper, the Holy Kiſs, and Love-Feaſts in the Primitive Church.

But how indifferent ſoever the things are in themſelves, and that the nature of the thing varies not, nor is bettered by the uſe, or made worſe by the alteration or forbearance of them; yet I confeſs there is a difficulty in our circumſtances how to proceed. For without quitting or altering, it ſeems the Diſſenting party is not to be brought into the Church; and without retaining them, it's likely many of our own will hardly be kept in it. Both parties are in the Extremes, and yet both are to be regarded; the one, that there be no Schiſm from the Church; the other that there be no Schiſm in it. And therefore to accommodate this matter, ſome have thought it moſt convenient to leave the caſe wholly indifferent, to wear or not wear a Surplice, to uſe or not uſe the Croſs, to kneel, ſtand, or ſit in the Lord's Supper; but I am afraid inſtead of uniting, this would more divide us, and ſet Clergy againſt Clergy, and People againſt People, and ſometimes People againſt Clergy. And therefore in my poor opinion, the beſt expedient is firſt of all to have ſome Rubricks drawn up to ſet forth for what reaſon the Church doth uſe and retain them, (without the *Tokens* and *Dedications* heretofore alluded

ded to.) And then to find out ſome way for a mitigation. As for inſtance, if the Miniſter to be admitted, yet ſcruples theuſe of the Surplice or Croſs, upon application to the *Biſhop*, another may be appointed to do that Service. And if one of the Laity ſcruples the uſe of the Croſs, the Miniſter may be permitted in that caſe to Baptize without it: Or if Kneeling at the Sacrament, that the perſon ſo ſcrupling may have it delivered unto him in another poſture, provided it be not at the Table, but in ſome convenient Pew or Place appointed by the Miniſter. And the ſame courſe may be taken for Godfathers, which if the Parent ſignifies he cannot procure, or is not ſatisfied in, it ſhall be lawful for the Miniſter to accept of the Sponſion of the Parent.

4. *Reordination.* This is the caſe of thoſe that are not now againſt Epiſcopal Orders, but having been Ordained by Presbyters, they think it unlawful to renounce them; and to be Reordained, where they have been already Ordained.

And they plead for themſelves:

That though by the late Act of Parliament none are to be admitted to officiate in the Church of *England* without Epiſcopal Ordination, yet it was not ſo before.

For, 1. the Ordination by Presbyters was by our Church accounted valid, though not every way perfect, and Foreigners were ſuffered to enjoy Eccleſiaſtical Preferments here without Reordination, as was the caſe of *Peter du Moulin*, &c.

2. It was not only ſo with Foreigners, but alſo thoſe that were made Presbyters by Presbyters in *Scot-*

Bp *Spotſw.* Hiſt. of *Scotland.*

Scotland, were made Biſhops without any New Ordination.

3. They plead though their caſe is ſomewhat different, yet it's ſo near the ſame, that the difference cannot (as far as they conceive) make that altogether invalid in them, which was ſo far valid in the other, as not to require a New Ordination.

4. They plead *Quod fieri non debet factum valet*; and that were it to do again they would not chuſe it, but being done, and ſometimes when they could not have Epiſcopal Ordination, they think ſome favour is to be allowed for this once. My buſineſs is not to enquire into the ſufficiency of their Reaſons, but what may be done for the compoſing now of this matter, and the preſerving of the Right of Epiſcopal Ordination (which St. *Hierom* himſelf makes the ſole Prerogative and diſtinguiſhing Character of that Order) and the quieting of the Conſciences of thoſe that are herein concerned. Now there are three methods may be taken; either That obſerved by Archbiſhop *Bramhall*, or a Form hypothetically drawn up, or that of the Bill of Union. I cannot think that of the Primate has eſcap'd you, but yet becauſe I have the Book before me, I ſhall tranſcribe it: *Non annihilantes priores ordines (ſi quos habuit) nec validitatem aut invaliditatem eorundem determinantes, multo minus Ordines Sacros Eccleſiarum Forinſecarum condemnantes, quos proprio Judici relinquimus: Sed ſolummodo ſupplentes quicquid prius defuit per Canones Eccleſiæ Anglicanæ requiſitum, & providentes paci Eccleſiæ, ut Schiſmatis tollatur occaſio: Et Conſcientiis Fidelium ſatisfiat,*

Epiſt. ad *Evagr.*

His Life prefixed to his Works.

at, nec ullo modo dubitent de ejus Ordinatione, aut actus ſuos Presbyteriales tanquam invalidos averſentur. In cujus rei teſtimonium, &c.

We may here obſerve how cautiouſly this great Man proceeded betwixt ratifying and annulling their Orders, that he might not give or take away too much. And withal how far he thought it neceſſary to go for the peace of the Church, and the taking away the occaſion of Schiſm.

The other method is hypothetical, after the ſame way that's uſed in Baptizing ſuch of whoſe Baptiſm we have no proof, *viz. If thou art not already Ordained, I Ordain thee,* &c.

The only Objection I can foreſee at preſent, againſt this is, that the other is matter of Fact that is in queſtion, but here it's matter of Right.

But to that I anſwer, that is not to the point; for both Caſes are hypothetically put, and ſo the Right is no more determined by the one, than the Fact is by the other. And *if thou art not already Baptized, &c.* doth not declare any thing about the Fact, then, *If thou art not already Ordained, &c.* doth not declare any thing about matter of Right, but both are left in ſuſpence; and ſo *If thou art not already, &c.* is no more than the Biſhop's *nec validitatem aut invaliditatem determinantes.*

The 3*d* is that of the *Bill of Union* (as I have heard) which is that the perſon to be qualified, ſhall be by impoſition of the Biſhops hands, receiv'd with a certain form of words, to ſignifie his admiſſion into the Church of *England*, as a Miniſter therein.

5. Declarations and Subscriptions. The former respects the Service-Book, the latter the Articles. As all publick Forms should be so compos'd as to take in as many into its Communion, as is consistent with the Constitution and self-preservation: So ought all Declarations and Subscriptions to answer the same end, and to be drawn up in such words as may be for the peace and establishment of the Church, the ease of those that are to Officiate in it, and the preservation of a good understanding among them. And I perswade my self it would have been more for the good of the Church, if what is now generally understood by the Declaration and Subscription were more plainly expres; *viz.* that the former is to the *Use*, and the latter to the Articles, as Articles of *Peace* and *Concord*. This is the sense of Archbishop *Laud*, if I understand him, but without doubt is that of Archbishop *Bramhall*, and Mr. *Chillingworth*; and it is not to be doubted, but that to make the whole the more easie, it is fit either that the Articles should be brought to the Subscription, or the Subscription to the Articles.

See King *Charles* I. Declaration for the Ratification of the Articles.

Against *Fisher*, p. 51. n. 2.

Schism Guarded, §. 1. c. 11, &c.

For those great men at the same time as they held that *the constant Doctrine of the Church of* England *is so pure and Orthodox, that there is no Error in it, which may necessitate or warrant any man to disturb the Peace, or renounce the Communion*; they do intimate (by the qualified sense they give of them, as *Articles of Peace*, and the Negative sense they allow a Subscription in, so as *not to contradict them*,) that there may be some Doctrines held by the Church which good and honest men

Answer to Charity Maintained.

may

may have ſome ſcruple about, or not be ſatisfied in. And it may be ſuppoſed again, that a good and honeſt man may queſtion whether ſuch a Subſcription be the Subſcription which the Church did intend, or is ſatisfied with; and therefore though he could ſubſcribe in their ſenſe, may think it unlawful to ſubſcribe. To apply this to the caſe of the preſent Conformity, ſuppoſe we, not a Diſſenter, but a young Student, qualified by a competent ſtock of Humane Learning and knowledge in Divinity, thinks of entring into Holy Orders, and as a prudent and good Man firſt of all conſiders what he is to do. The firſt thing he meets with is, that he muſt declare his *unfeigned aſſent and conſent* to the uſe of *all and every thing contained, and preſcribed in and by the Book of Common-Prayer*, and amongſt which he finds the *Apocrypha* is to be read. Now upon reading perhaps Dr. *Reynolds*, or Biſhop *Coſins*, &c. upon that Argument, as he is convinced of what our *Church* holds, that thoſe Books are not of Divine Authority; ſo alſo for that reaſon, that ſome of them contain things which our Writers prove to be manifeſtly falſe. Upon this he Queries, whether he may lawfully read That in the Church as a Leſſon for the People's Inſtruction, which he is convinced is falſe? From thence he proceeds to the *Pſalms*, and as he knows there are two Tranſlations in uſe, ſo he thinks himſelf bound to compare them, and upon Compariſon finds theſe in ſome things inconſiſtent, and one time the one to deny what the other affirms. Now ſince but one

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of theſe can be true, he queſtions whether when he is to uſe both, he may make the Text contradict it ſelf, and in the *Deſk* read with the Old, *They were not obedient unto his word*; in the Pulpit, or with the *Hebrew* and the New, read, *They rebelled not againſt his word*, *Pſal.* 105. 28.

He proceeds further, and comes to the Creeds, and becauſe that of *Athanaſius* is the larger, and ſo may be preſumed ſhould be the plainer, he begins to examine the Articles of it, and though he is abundantly ſatisfied in the Doctrine of the Sacred Trinity, and the Deity of the Son and Holy Ghoſt, yet he finds a great Diſpute betwixt the Greek and Latin Church about the *proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt from the Son.* Now the firſt Queſtion is, whether of theſe two Churches is in the right? And ſecondly, whether this be a Fundamental Article of the Faith, *which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be ſaved?* And the third Queſtion is, whether he may declare the Greek Church in a ſtate of Damnation for what is queſtionable, whether it be a Fundamental Article or not? And that it is queſtionable he finds, for this is not made neceſſary by *Athanaſius* himſelf, nor was originally either in the *Nicene* (truly ſo called) or *Athanaſian* Creed. Nor laſtly, is it ſo thought by our Church, which receiving the four firſt General Councils, conſequently agrees with the third, that of *Epheſus*, which made a peremptory Decree *againſt all Additions to be made hereafter to the Creed*: From whence it follows that nothing elſe was then accounted neceſ-

Athana. Epiſt. ad Serapion. Tom. 1.

Concil. Epheſ. Part 2. Art. 6.

ſary

ſary to be believed, but what was contained in the *Nicene*.

And now this young man's Doubt is further advanced, becauſe this is a Creed, and to be ſubſcribed to, and ſo ſeems ſtill leſs capable of the ſenſe before given of Subſcription, as a matter of *Peace* only.

Now how our Querift about the Commiſs did in theſe matters I know not; but I ſuppoſe there are others that found it *difficile* to conform, becauſe they found it difficult to ſatisfie themſelves in theſe and the like things.

And therefore it's convenient that the Forms of Subſcription and Declaration be explained. And it would be worth your while perhaps to conſider alſo, whether it will not be requiſite to have a Rubrick drawn up, and inſerted before the *Athanaſian* Creed, ſignifying, That *this Creed may be read*, or with an *Alias*, *This or the Nicene*; or that the Condemning Sentences be left out, or if continued, it may be expreſs'd, that they are to be applied only to thoſe that obſtinately deny the Fundamental Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, contained in that Creed.

The want of which doth give occaſion of ſcruple to many of our own People, that will not ſay *Amen* to it, as well as to the Diſſenters, and trouble to ſeveral of the Order that ſubſcribe it.

5. I ſhould now proceed to the Government of the Church, in which the chief thing deſired by the Diſſenters is, that the Presbytery might be reſtored to its ancient Priviledge; and that the Biſhops would conſult them, and permit them to ſhare in

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all acts belonging to their ſtation, which it's likely would be a great eaſe to, and alſo be for the honour of the Biſhop. It would make him more beloved by his Clergy, and take off from him what-ever he may ſuffer, when he is alone, by any miſ-government. He would then be as a *Epiſt. 6.* *Cyprian* reverenced by all, when he doth as he, that did nothing without their aſſiſtance and concurrence.

6. The laſt thing complained of, is the want of due Diſcipline, and eſpecially in the ſuperficial iſſuing forth of Excommunications. A matter indeed highly ſcandalous, and that is complain'd of by the Church as well as thoſe that diſſent from it. And is a Subject therefore worthy of mature conſideration, and to that I leave it.

I have now done with the Caſe of Diſſenters, and have ſhewed how there are Alterations may be made in the Church in favour of them, and the Church not be the worſe for them.

Againſt which I know not what can be reaſonably objected; but that either what can be hoped for from them, though the Church ſhould be diſpoſed to make ſuch Conceſſions, Relaxations, and Alterations? where are they that will come in? Or if they are ſo diſpoſed, and ſhould embrace theſe Overtures, what advantage will this be to the Church? To the firſt I Anſwer,

1. It's but trying upon ſuch terms as the Church will not be the worſe for; and if it ſucceed not, the fault will be theirs, and not ours. We ſhall thereby ſtifle their Clamours againſt the Church,

and

and ſhall ſhew our ſelves to be perſons of Candour and Charity, and I may add Juſtice and Integrity. When the Church having it now in their power do perform what they ſo lately promiſed by their Biſhops when it was not in their power, *viz.* That *they wanted no due Tenderneſs towards Diſſenters, but were willing to come to ſuch a Temper as ſhould be thought fit, when that matter ſhould be conſidered and ſetled in Parliament and Convocation.* We know not how far ſuch ſteps may prevail upon the moſt diſſatisfied, but we may be certain of their due effect upon thoſe that are ſincere and impartial.

But it may be ſaid, what need is there of ſuch, or what benefit will it be to the Church to admit thoſe, who when kept out, are Enemies, and when let in, will be no Friends?

To this I anſwer in the words of the Venerable Prelate before quoted, *Theſe men, in behalf of whom I have ſpoken, are in being already, and will Preach ſomewhere or other; and 'tis better we had them in publick than in corners, that ſo the Church either had Security for their peaceable Doctrine, (which I verily believe we may have as to moſt of them,) or opportunities to convict them of Sedition.* What he ſaith further is worthy of peruſal, and is ſufficient to put the Querie out of Countenance, *viz.* The Proteſtant peace-maker, p. 127, 128.

But I have othergueſs Arguments that move me.

1. *To thoſe who ask, What need of more Union? I return, What need of Holineſs? What need of Godlineſs, Charity, Juſtice? Are theſe Chriſtian Duties, and is not Union and Peace as much ſo?*

2. *I am and muſt be in the mind, that the ſtrength of the Proteſtant Cauſe, both here at home, and through-*

out Chriſtendom, lies in the Union of Proteſtants; and the Glory, Purity, and Power of Chriſtianity in this World, ſtand or fall with Proteſtantiſm.

3. *I muſt be ſo ingenuous as to acknowledge. That though the City and divers particular places, flouriſh with ſuch Preachers as never they had before, yet the way of Preaching in many parts of the Country, and in ſome no obſcure places too, might be much improved and needs ſupply. And it can never be made out to the World, but it were better we had too many good Preachers, than too few.*

I could tell ſome men in their ear, They alſo have ſtrangely multiplied Curacies, which are too often vacant. The Lord forgive them, and redreſs this great evil in his Church.

Having clear'd this Point, I ſhall proceed to ſhew

3 General. 3. That there are ſuch things in our Church and Conſtitution which may be altered, ſo that the Church ſhall be the better for ſuch alterations. And this is a caſe would require our conſideration, although there was not a Diſſenter amongſt us. And that may be, by taking away what may be ſpared, and that ſometime is ſuperfluous. By ſupplying what is wanting, by clearing what is doubtful, by amending what's amiſs, and improving what is tolerable and well, ſo as to make it yet more beneficial and ſolemn.

(1.) By taking away what may be ſpared. And here it may well be queried, whether it's not better both for Miniſter and People, to have the Sunday Service ſhortned, than continued to that length that it has at preſent. For the People, who (whatever ſome Devout Perſons may conceive, or howſoever they

they may be able to keep up their minds and temper) are apt to flag and have their Spirits tired and cloy'd by a tedious and prolix Service thô ne're ſo devout; and if for the ſake of the weaker, the Church has thought fit to break the Service into parts, and Collects, there is as much reaſon, why the whole ſhould be ſo contrived as to fall in with the ſame end. But if we proceed to the caſe of the Miniſter, it will ſeem more neceſſary, upon whom the Duty lies too hard, if the whole is to be performed as the Rubrick requires, without any relaxation. The Service of the Church, as it's not to be contrived only for the more ſerious and devout, and thoſe that have full leiſure, but for the whole Body, as it's made up of Perſons of different tempers, *&c.* ſo it's to be ſo ordered not as to fit the City-Clergy only, or thoſe that are in better circumſtances of helping themſelves, but the whole: And we are to conſult and provide as well for thoſe that have no help, as thoſe that have; for thoſe that have great Cures, as well as thoſe that have ſmall; for the infirm and aged, as well as the healthy and young. Into whoſe place and circumſtances you of the Convocation ought to put your ſelves, if they will judge aright, which if they did, I believe they will ſay of thoſe that are of another mind, what Biſhop *Sanderſon* ſaid of his Brethren at the *Savoy*, upon the like occaſion, That they *were taking a courſe to kill the inferiour Clergy*. If Perſons were to try the harder as well as the eaſier condition, ſurely they would be more moderate and condeſcending. And if any are yet to be convinced, ſend them down to ſome Pariſhes we know, for a Month, to eaſe the poor Miniſter by reading Prayers, and Preaching at his

Church, then trudge a mile, two, or three on foot in ill weather and bad ways to ſerve a ſmall Cure, than return to read Prayers at home; and at Evening, after all his labour, ſit down with Bread and Cheeſe, and ſmall Beer, and ſee how he likes it: Or if he likes not this, let him go to ſome populous Market-Town, where the Burthen is great, and the Pay very ſmall; let him Read and Preach in the Morning, and the like again in the Afternoon; or if not Preach, yet *Read*, *Catechiſe*, *Chriſten* and *Bury* the Dead, and *Viſit* the Sick, and come home ready to faint away with the Service, and be forced to get to a warm Bed for want of Cordial or Wine, and ſuch refreſhments. And after all, let him conſider what it is to do this Month after Month, Year after Year, till the ſpirits of the poor man are quite exhauſted, and he languiſhes away with a Conſumption; or is ſurprized through theſe heats and colds with a Feaver, that eaſes him of his charge. And then come to your Convocation, and tell them whether the Service be too long or no.

Nay, I perſwade my ſelf theſe Gentlemen that are thus ready to impoſe burdens upon others, would then be of the firſt that complain. For this is quite another thing to what it is to walk from a warm houſe to a Cathedral, and for half an hour turn over a Service-Book, hear a Sermon, and return to a warm room, and good fare in the cloſe of it. Let them that have Curates and Conveniencies do as they pleaſe, but for God's ſake let not them that hardly know what it is to do all the Service of a Cure throughout the year, or perhaps their life, preſcribe to thoſe that weekly go through the Office of it.

But

But perhaps you will ſay, how is this to be done? I anſwer firſt, think ſenſibly of it, and you will ſoon find out a way. But however to prevent any excuſe.

1. Reduce things to the former ſtate they were in, and as they were originally ſeveral diſtinct Offices, ſo let them be uſed in their proper times and ſeaſons. As for example, let the Communion-Service be for a Communion, and perſons not obliged to read it but at that ſeaſon *, or when there is no Sermon.

* To the old Rubrick was *Collects, Epiſtles* and *Goſpels, to be uſed at the Celebration of the Lord's-Supper.*

2. Why may not the Litany be ſhortned by concluding at the Lord's-Prayer, and leaving out what follows; which (bating the Reſponſals) ſeems not ſo agreeable to the Order of a *Litany*, and was compoſed alſo (as we may gueſs) peculiarly with reſpect to a ſtate of Perſecution. And ſo may be left to the diſcretion of the Miniſter to read or omit it.

3. That at leaſt it be left to his diſcretion again in ſhort days, and extremity of weather; one day to read one part, and another day another, and all in two days. For why may not that be permitted to be done in two days, which in ſome Cathedrals is divided into ſeveral hours of the ſame day. And for the ſame reaſon, eſpecially where the people have their Cattel to fodder, &c. that it be permitted in the Afternoon to leave out the firſt Leſſon, or the like; that ſo they may be allowed to do that, which otherwiſe ſometimes they are forced to do: And that neither their own Conſciences be hamper'd, nor they expoſed to the raſh Cenſures of ſome of their over-rigorous, and yet too often not over laborious Brethren.

It may be conſidered further whether in the Weekly

Weekly Service in the Country Pariſhes, it's not to be left to the liberty and diſcretion of the Miniſter to uſe the Prayers without the Leſſons, and eſpecially the *Litany* alone on *Wedneſdays* or *Fridays*; that ſo the people by not being kept too long from their Labours may be encouraged to come to the Prayers. It being far better to have Prayers alone than to have the doors ſhut up for want of two or three to make an Aſſembly.

If it be ſaid this Liberty and Diſcretion do too often not meet together in the Curate.

I anſwer, it's great pity if it be ſo, but I ſhould think he may be reaſonably thought competently qualified to order theſe things that is truſted with the Souls of the People. If it be otherwiſe let the Biſhop that Ordains, and Archdeacon that preſents, and the Rector that provides the Curate, anſwer for it.

There are ſome things of the like nature left to diſcretion, as in the Voluntary Prayers, the *General Thankſgiving*, &c.

(2.) There may be an alteration to the better by ſupplying what is wanting in the Church-Service. And of this ſort are (1) an Office for receiving Penitents after an Apoſtacy from our Religion; or in the caſe of publick and notorious Scandal. (2) An Office for receiving Perſons abſolved after ſolemn Excommunication, into our Communion. (3) An Office for the Priſons, conſiſting of Prayers to be uſed in them, and eſpecially at Executions.

(3.) By amending what's fit to be amended. That I may not be miſtaken in the Caſe: I do, 1. beforehand declare what Dr. *Featly* once ſaid of the *Liturgy* before the laſt Review, to be my opinion,

That

That the Book of Common Prayer (the Kalendar being reformed in point of Apocryphal Saints and Chapters, &c.) *is the moſt compleat, perfect and exact Liturgy in the Chriſtian World.* 2. That (as the Preface to the Liturgy ſaith of the former) *it doth not contain any thing contrary to the Word of God, or to ſound Doctrine, or which a Godly man may not with a good conſcience uſe and ſubmit to*; and I will add what he not only lawfully, but comfortably may joyn in. 3. (As it goes on) *That it doth not contain any thing, which is not fairly defenſible againſt any that ſhall oppoſe the ſame; if it ſhall be allowed ſuch juſt and favourable conſtruction, as in common equity ought to be allowed to all Humane Writings*, &c. And when I have allowed this, I think it no ways inconſiſtent with what Mr. *Thorndike* has ſaid, *viz The Form of Divine Service now in force by Law, may be acknowledged capable of amendment, without diſparagement either to the wiſdom of the Church that preſcribed it, or of the Nation that Enacted it.* For it may in the whole be the beſt in its kind, and what a godly man may uſe and ſubmit, and contain nothing but what is ſo far fairly defenſible. And yet if we come more nicely to enquire into it, it may have ſome things obſcure and too doubtfully expreſt, it may be in its Phraſeology liable to miſapplication, through change of words, times and affairs, it may be ſometimes too fanciful; that is, it may in the whole be uſeful, and devout, and in all the parts of it tolerable and defenſible, where yet it is not to be commended and applauded. I ſhall paſs it over as eaſily as I can. To give a few Inſtances of each,

Dipper dipt p. 16, &c.

A good way of Compoſing Differences at the end of *Juſt Weights*, &c. p. 245. So the Biſhop of *Cork*, pag. 117.

1. There

1. There are ſome things obſcure, as in the Prayer for the Clergy, *Who alone workeſt great Marvels, ſend down*, &c. So in the Collect for Trinity-Sunday, *Who has given us grace in the power of the divine Majeſty, to worſhip the Unity*. In the proper Preface at the Communion for *Trinity-Sunday*, That which we believe of the glory of the Father, the ſame we believe of the Son, and of the Holy-Ghoſt, *without any difference or inequality*. In the Prayer before the Communion, *That our ſinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our ſouls waſhed through his moſt precious blood*. In the Office of Baptiſm---*By the Baptiſm of thy well-beloved Son, in the River* Jordan, *didſt ſanctifie water*. In the Office of Matrimony, *With my Body I thee worſhip*. In that of Burial, *Foraſmuch as it hath pleaſed Almighty God to take to himſelf*, &c. which ſuppoſes Diſcipline; and therefore where Diſcipline is not exercis'd, it's hard to uſe it in all caſes, without a further Explication. So are there ſometimes in the Collects the like obſcurity, as that of *Eaſter-Sunday*, where the Preface and the Petition (as it ſeems) want a better connexion. So alſo the firſt *Sunday* after *Eaſter*, &c. Sometimes again there are things very liable to miſapplication, as the form of Abſolution in the Office for Viſiting the Sick, *By his authority committed to me, I abſolve thee*. Of which the Church of *Rome* has made ſo great advantage, that it was the matter of a publick Diſpute, ſince printed. To this may be added, the Anſwer in the Catechiſm, *The Body and Blood of Chriſt, which are Verily and Indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's-Supper*. Such again is that to weak Minds, which is in the Exhortation

tation for warning of the Communion, *Becauſe it's requiſite that no man ſhould come to the Holy Communion but with a full truſt in God's mercy, and with a quiet Conſcience.* Such again, are thoſe Collects which too much incline to the *Pelagian* Phraſe of laying the force of temptation, and man's liableneſs to ſin, upon the frailty and not the corruption of our Nature, as the firſt and 24*th.* Sundays after Trinity. Laſtly, there are ſome of the Collects that are too fanciful, and ſavour of the Breviary, as thoſe of St. *Luke*, St. *John*, *Simon and Jude*. Now after all, I do not ſay theſe or the like things are not tolerable, or defenſible, but that they are not only capable of amendment, but in a ſort do need it.

(4.) The Offices of the Church may be improved; and of this I ſhall give an inſtance or two.

1. In the Collects, which, though good, may be made, as I conceive, more uſeful for exciting the Devotion of the People, if (where it may conveniently be done) they be ſo formed, as to have a reſpect to the Epiſtle and Goſpel then read. This I perceive was a deſign the Commiſſioners of the *Savoy* had in their eye; ſuch were the third Sunday in *Advent*, and the ſixth Sunday after *Epiphany*. It was great pity they had not time (as I ſuppoſe) to have gone through with the whole; for we may eaſily apprehend by what was then done, the difference, and advantage that might have been gained by it.

2. In the Office of Confirmation, which if it had notice given of it the Sunday before, by an Exhortation like unto that before the Sacrament; and a Diſcourſe about the Nature, Uſe, and Obligation of

it, immediately before the Biſhop Confirms, and a ſerious Exhortation after it, with ſome little Enlargements and Alterations of the Collects, it would be a great means to recover the dignity of that excellent Inſtitution, and to form in the minds of youth a greater ſenſe of Religion.

I hope, Sir, by this time I have ſufficiently revived thoſe things in your mind which we have ſo often entertained one another with, and have withal proved what I have undertaken, about the poſſibility of making ſome alterations in our Church without damage to it, and of making others to its advantage and honour, its quiet and ſecurity. It was eaſie for me to have been copious upon this Argument, but I have endeavour'd to confine my ſelf, ſince it is to you I write, who are already ſo acquainted with theſe things, as to need no inſtructer, and withal, becauſe it's a task not very grateful to me. But I muſt not ſo leave the Point, for I have yet one Branch remains, which is to ſhew,

4. General. 4. That this is a fit ſeaſon for ſuch alterations. The laſt refuge thoſe that are unwilling to hearken to this Doctrine, betake themſelves to, is, that though theſe alterations are many of them fit to be made, yet this is not a time for it. This was I perceive the mind of ſome of our Neighbourhood, that are ſince gone up to ſit as Members of your Convocation, who not long before their departure gave me this anſwer. I confeſs this their reply much ſurpriz'd me. *Not a ſeaſon*, ſaid I. Is there any thing can make that not to be ſeaſonable, which is alway a duty? Is there any ſeaſon in which we are not as much as in us lies to ſeek peace, and enſue it? Was it a ſeaſon for the Repreſentatives of our Church, and for us with

with them, to declare to all the World, they *wanted not a due tenderneſs* toward Diſſenters, and were *willing to come to ſuch a temper as ſhould be thought fit when the matter ſhould be conſidered and ſetled in a Parliament and Convocation?* Was it then their *Temper* and a *Seaſon*, when they were not in a condition, when the King was againſt it, and no Parliament or Convention to ſettle it? And is it not their *Temper* and a *Seaſon* when they are in a condition, when the King is for it, and a Parliament and Convocation in being to confirm it? And can we think the Nation has or can forget it, although we don't care to remember or perform it?

Not a Seaſon! Was it a Seaſon to Unite when we had an Enemy ready to devour us? And becauſe he is with-drawn, and for want of an Adverſary, ſhall we devour one another? Are we yet without danger? And if not, have we leſs reaſon to fear, when we are divided (as we are now) than when united (as we were then?) Have we *begun in the Spirit* of Unity and Amity; and are we now made *perfect* or ſecure by the *Fleſh* of Contention and Obſtinacy? It was obſerv'd by a Reverend Prelate of this Church, *I take it to be a greater fault in Conformiſts to be ſtiff and averſe to Union, than in any other ſort, inaſmuch as the Principles we profeſs are more truly Catholick than thoſe of any other I know.* But if this be our temper, the Donatiſts were Catholicks to us: for they and their Principles went one way, but here we and our Principles are two. *Proteſtant Peace-maker*, p. 62.

But, ſaid I, ſuppoſe there was never a Diſſenter in the Land, have I not known you willing, forward and deſirous to have thoſe Alterations made, that (for ought I hear) are like to be propos'd to you? And have you all o'th' ſudden loſt your Candour, as well as your Integrity? And ſhall that which was before an Infirmity, be adopted into a State of Perfection? What do you think the Apocrypha able to vye with Canonical Scripture, and the Old Tranſlation of the *Pſalms* to be more uſeful and more exact than the New, and a State of the Church without Diſcipline, more perfect than what is under the Regiment and influence of it?

Of a ſudden I perceived, that one of my Friends gave way; but at length the other interrupted me, and gravely re-

replied; My Friend, you have over-run the Point; for when we say it's not Seeasonable, we mean, it's not seasonable to change a good Settlement for a bad, one that has pass'd the Test of an Age, for what is yet to come. And had we not better be content with our Constitution as it is, with all its infirmities, than to throw it all upon the chance of a new Settlement?

Upon this I saw all my former Arguing was lost, and that I was to take the Case by a new handle. Well! Suppose, said I, the Parliament illegal, and the Government precarious, and the Laws now made, no Laws, you are but where you were. If theirs be no Law, your old Law is firm and stable: But if the Government, Parliament and Law be good, you will have as good a Law for your intended Establishment, as you had in any one Parliament for your old. And you are in so much the better condition, as you have fewer Enemies, and are in better circumstances of making Friends than before: that is, you will be in as much better a condition, as your new (if we may call it new) is better than your old. But pray, said I, to go a little further, What do you think will follow, if this Government sink? (which God forbid) What will then be your Case? Will you then retire to *Declarations* and *Temper* again? Or can you think the *Polyphemus* of Popery will spare those that wait the *Season*, and are not for a Union, till a Union will do them no good? Assure your selves, my Friends, you must then be content to part with your Consciences and your Religion, to save your Lives, or part with your Lives to save your Consciences.

I thought it was now high time to leave them to their Coach, and Consideration: And I hope by this time they are become Converts.

But, my good Friend, I have held you too long; in fine, you see where the Cause doth rest; we are all become mighty Politicians, or Tools for them that are so. I pray God these Men be not wise too late, but that they and we may know the things belonging to our Peace, before they be hid from our Eyes. I am, Dear Sir,

Your Faithful Servant,

20th. *Novemb.* 1689. N. L.

FINIS.

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